

# Whitsunday - Pentecost

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Today we celebrate Pentecost, also called Whitsunday in the older English Catholic tradition. Pentecost is that time we celebrate and reflect on the coming of the Holy Ghost or the Holy Spirit.

But before we go any further, we need to identify the meaning of the Holy Spirit. You see, the Holy Spirit is not a mere force. The Holy Spirit is not some energy that we tap into. The Holy Spirit is not a feeling that we seek to experience time and time again. The Holy Spirit is a person.

He is the third person of the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost or the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, like the Father, is unseen.

And Jesus tells us what the ministry of the Holy Spirit is here in our gospel text or in our gospel reading. We read in John chapter 14, verse 26, But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.

[ 1 : 2 8 ] We learn that the Holy Spirit is the Paraclete. That is, he is the Helper. He's the Counselor. He's the Comforter. And he's the one who makes Jesus known to us.

That's his role. How does he do this? Well, John chapter 14, verse 26, says that the Holy Spirit will bring to remembrance, hyponesis is that word, bring to remembrance all the things that our Lord said and did.

This remembrance is not simply recalling the words and actions of Jesus that he did in the past or historic events. The Holy Spirit makes Jesus known by transforming us to now be participants in our Lord's redemption and his love.

Let me make this very clear by demonstrating from Scripture what is meant by this hyponesis or this type of remembrance or participation.

St. Paul says in those familiar words of Romans chapter 6, verses 3 and 4, Do you not know that as many of us, as were baptized into Christ Jesus, were baptized into his death?

[ 2 : 5 1 ] We participate or participated in his death. Therefore, we were buried with him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we should walk in newness of life.

Baptism is not merely an act where we simply recall what Jesus did long ago. He died on the cross. He rose from the dead.

Baptism is more than that. It is now our participation in his death, his resurrection, and even his ascension. It's our participation in new life.

Let me even be more candid from St. Paul. In 1 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 16, we read those rhetorical questions that St. Paul raises here.

As he says, and I quote, The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?

[ 4 : 0 6 ] In other words, we share in Christ, not merely by recounting his story, but now becoming a part of that story, partaking of water, bread, and wine.

We now participate in our Lord's death, his resurrection, his ascension, which brings eternal life. How does that happen? It's the work of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit makes Christ known to us by these simple forms or matter, or to use the language of the catechism, these outward signs, in order to give us now grace and bring us into communion with God.

The Holy Spirit uses the stuff, that deep theological term, the stuff of creation. The Holy Spirit does to us what he did at the very beginning when creation came into being.

He takes the formless and the void, and he breathes life into creation. And he breathes his life into us, his new creation.

[ 5 : 31 ] He makes us participants as we now share in his life and in his power over death. If he's just a mere historical figure, and all we do is recount what he did, he's no better than Socrates or some great philosopher.

We participate, and that's what the Holy Spirit does. He connects us mysteriously now to the work of Christ. The Holy Spirit came upon those followers of Jesus on the day of Pentecost, bringing clarity out of confusion.

People from a variety of nationalities, languages, and cultures heard the sermon from St. Peter, each in their own language. And instead of a barrier and confusion.

These listeners heard the word of God in perfect clarity. As the Holy Spirit now connected them to the one that was being proclaimed, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

The Holy Spirit reversed the curse at Babel that brought confusion. And that is what the Holy Spirit wants to do with each and every one of you.

[ 6 : 58 ] He wants you now to not only share in the life and in the death and in the resurrection and ascension of Jesus.

He now uses you as the body of Christ to speak and live the truth in a world of confusion. Friends, just as you have been made participants in Christ, you now share in the love of God through holy baptism and through the Holy Eucharist.

Your growth does not just stop there. The Holy Spirit desires to conform you more and more to Christ.

So that you might be an agent of clarity. How does this happen? Well, listen again as I read some of John chapter 14 that we heard in our gospel reading.

In John chapter 14 verse 15, Jesus said unto his disciples, If you love me, keep my commandments. John chapter 14 verse 21, He who has my commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves me.

[ 8 : 19 ] And he who loves me will be loved by my father. And note, and I will love him and manifest myself to him. How does he manifest himself to us?

That is what the Holy Spirit does. In John chapter 14 verse 24, He who does not love me does not keep my words.

And the word which you hear is not mine, but the father's who sent me. As we participate in Christ, we share in his life and love.

And we are called now to deepen that love. This is not the language of a mere lawgiver. It is the language of love.

It is the language of unity between a bride and a bridegroom. And this is what the Holy Spirit is doing.

[ 9 : 17 ] He is taking people and he is transforming people through water, bread, wine, and then bringing people into greater union with Christ.

So that the love and care of God might then be extended through you into the world. As we draw closer to God by yielding to the Holy Spirit and conformity to the word of God.

We will grow in greater union with our God. See, so many times we think of the Christian faith as just being transactional.

You're in, you're out. But it's more than that for Christians. It's like marriage. There are bumps, there are problems, but there's also growth.

We will feel more alienated. We will feel more isolated to the world and its values as we conform ourselves more to the word of God.

[ 10 : 31 ] And this is what the Holy Spirit does as he desires to draw us into deeper union with God. He desires to draw each and every one of you into this drama, this divine dance with the bridegroom, the Savior.

At the conclusion of our gospel text here in John chapter 14, verse 31, we hear the words of Jesus who said this. Listen carefully.

But that the world may know that I love the Father and as the Father gave me commandments, so I do. So I do. Jesus says, as the Father gave me commandments, so I do.

Think about that statement for a moment. Jesus says that the world will know his love for his Father. How? As he submitted himself to the Father's will.

Jesus came not only to share his divine life with us. He came to restore our true humanity, thereby conforming us to the will and word of the Father through the Holy Spirit.

[ 12 : 01 ] Beloved, as baptized Christians who share in this new life of Christ made possible through the sacraments, we are called now to walk and to imitate the one with whom we participate.

That's what the term Christian means. To be a little Christ. We are called to imitate the one with whom we participate, Jesus Christ, by the work of the Holy Spirit in order to delight in our Heavenly Father.

We are called to be a little with whom we participate in our Heavenly Father.

It's because we enter into this divine dance. We enter into his love through holy baptism. And we yield ourselves to the Holy Spirit who connects and calls us to now walk with our Bridegroom on the narrow path to eternal life.

And we are called to grow in our Heavenly Father. And we are called to grow in this love and to grow in this grace. And folks, it doesn't just stop at death.

[ 13 : 38 ] It continues for all eternity. Friends, this is not only our bounden duty to use the language of the prayer book.

It's our delight. It's the delight of our hearts as we seek to be led by the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Amen. And we do this in great joy and great hope because the Comforter has come.

Amen. Amen. In the name of the Father and of the Son of the Holy Ghost. Amen.